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Game feature for a gaming machine

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(71) Applicant(s)
Aristocrat Leisure Industries Pty Ltd

(72) Inventor(s)
Nicholas Bennett

(74) Agent/Attorney
F B RICE and CO, 605 Darling Street, BALMAIN NSW 2041

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ABSTRACT

A gaming machine has display means, and game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to play a game wherein a plurality of indicia are randomly selected and displayed on the display means the indicia including wild card symbols which can substitute for any symbol and, if a winning combination occurs, the machine pays a prize. The game is characterised in that the wild card also substitute for linearly adjacent symbols or symbols at other predetermined locations on the display. The game may be implemented on gaming machines incorporating a video display or physical rolls.



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ORIGINAL

**COMPLETE SPECIFICATION
STANDARD PATENT**

Invention Title:

Game feature for a gaming machine

The following statement is a full description of this invention including
the best method of performing it known to us:-

Background of the Invention

The present invention relates to gaming machines of the type generally referred to as slot machines, fruit machines, or poker machines, and in particular the invention provides a game to be played on such a machine.

Description of the prior art

Players who regularly play gaming machines, quickly tire of particular games and it is therefore necessary for manufacturers of gaming machines to come up with either innovative game features that add interest to the games provided on such machines, or provide new games in order to keep the players amused and willing to continue playing gaming machines.

Recently, the gaming machine market has experienced considerable growth and there is intense competition between manufacturers of gaming machines to supply the various existing and new venues. Clearly the revenue raised by an operator of a particular venue depends on the amount of money wagered. The amount of money wagered on a particular machine is related to the popularity of the machine. Thus when selecting a supplier of gaming machines, the operator of venue often pays close attention to the popularity of the various games with their patrons.

Therefore, gaming machine manufacturers are keen to devise games which are popular with players, as a mechanism for improving sales.

In particular, manufacturers regularly devise new games or game features which have not previously been seen on slot machines, in order to stimulate renewal of player interest.

The two most popular types of gaming machine either offer card games, particularly poker and variations of that game, or are machines of the traditional, and somewhat confusingly named, poker machine style (also known as fruit machines) in which the display means comprises a set of rotatable reels, each carrying a plurality of symbols, or a video simulation thereof.

One common game feature is a wild card which can substitute for any symbol (i.e. can be any of the available symbols, whichever is most advantageous to the player) to give players a sense that their chances of winning are improved.

The present invention relates to a novel game feature which can be used to give added player interest to such games.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention consists of a gaming machine having display means, and game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to play a game wherein a plurality of indicia are randomly selected and displayed on the display means the indicia including wild card symbols which can substitute for any symbol and, if a winning combination occurs, the machine pays a prize, the game being characterised in that the wild card also substitute for linearly adjacent symbols or other symbols at predetermined location.

In the context of the present invention linearly adjacent means horizontally and/or vertically adjacent.

As well as substituting for linearly adjacent symbols, the wild card may also substitute for symbols at a predetermined number of other locations on the display means, for example the wild card may substitute for symbols which are diagonally adjacent.

The present invention is applicable to video gaming machines of the traditional poker machine style in which the display means comprises a video simulation of a set of rotatable reels, each carrying a plurality of symbols. The invention is equally applicable to video draw poker machines in which a poker hand is displayed on the screen, the cards of the hand being selected from a standard 52 or 53 card deck.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Specific embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, and with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:-

Figure 1 shows a gaming machine having a video simulation of a rotating reel display adapted to play a game incorporating the present invention; and

Figure 2 illustrates a screen display for the gaming machine shown in Figure 1.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

In the following detailed description, the methodology of the embodiments will be described, and it is to be understood that it is within the capabilities of the non-inventive worker in the art to introduce the methodology on any standard microprocessor-based gaming machine by means of appropriate programming.

Referring to Figure 1 of the drawings, the first embodiment of the invention is illustrated in which a slot machine 20 of the type having a video display screen 30 which displays a plurality of rotatable reels 32 carrying symbols, of which one token symbol, S, is indicated at 34. The slot machine is arranged to pay a prize on the occurrence of a predetermined symbol or combination of symbols.

In the slot machine 20 illustrated in Figure 1, the game is initiated by a push button 36, however it will be recognised by persons skilled in the art that this operating mechanism might be replaced by a pull handle or other type of actuator such as a touch screen "button", in other embodiments of the invention. The top box on top of the slot machine 20 carries an artwork panel 38 which displays the various winning combinations for which a prize is paid on the machine.

The poker game played on the machine is a relatively standard poker game which includes a three by five symbol display window, generally indicated at 50, and allows multiple pay lines, numbered 1, 2 and 3, best seen in Figure 2.

The symbols which are present on the "reels" of the gaming machine in addition to the WILD card symbol, W, may include the following:-

KING - K
 QUEEN - Q
 JACK - J
 TEN - TEN
 SEVEN - SVN

Other symbols may also be present.

Referring once more to Figure 2, the WILD symbol, "W", 52, in row 1 can act as a QUEEN, "Q", to give five QUEENS in row 1 and the appropriate prize is awarded. At the same time, the WILD card can also substitute for the diagonally adjacent JACK, "J", and act as a king 54 in row 3 to give a total of four KINGS on that row. The WILD card can also substitute for the TEN, 56, in row 2, acting as a JACK to give five JACKS in that row. Thus the player is awarded a prize for five JACKS, four KINGS, and five QUEENS.

The WILD card could substitute for cards in other predetermined locations, other than those locations described above.

Although the invention has been described in relation to a poker style machine game the invention is equally applicable to video draw poker machines in which a poker hand is displayed on the screen, the cards of the hand being selected from a standard 52 or 53 card deck.

5 Further, although the embodiment described above relates to a gaming machine having a video display means, the game could advantageously be implemented on a more traditional style gaming machine having rotatable reels controlled by stepper motors, which is particularly advantageous since it tends to be more difficult to implement innovative
10 game features on such machines as compared with the more flexible gaming machines employing video displays.

15 It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

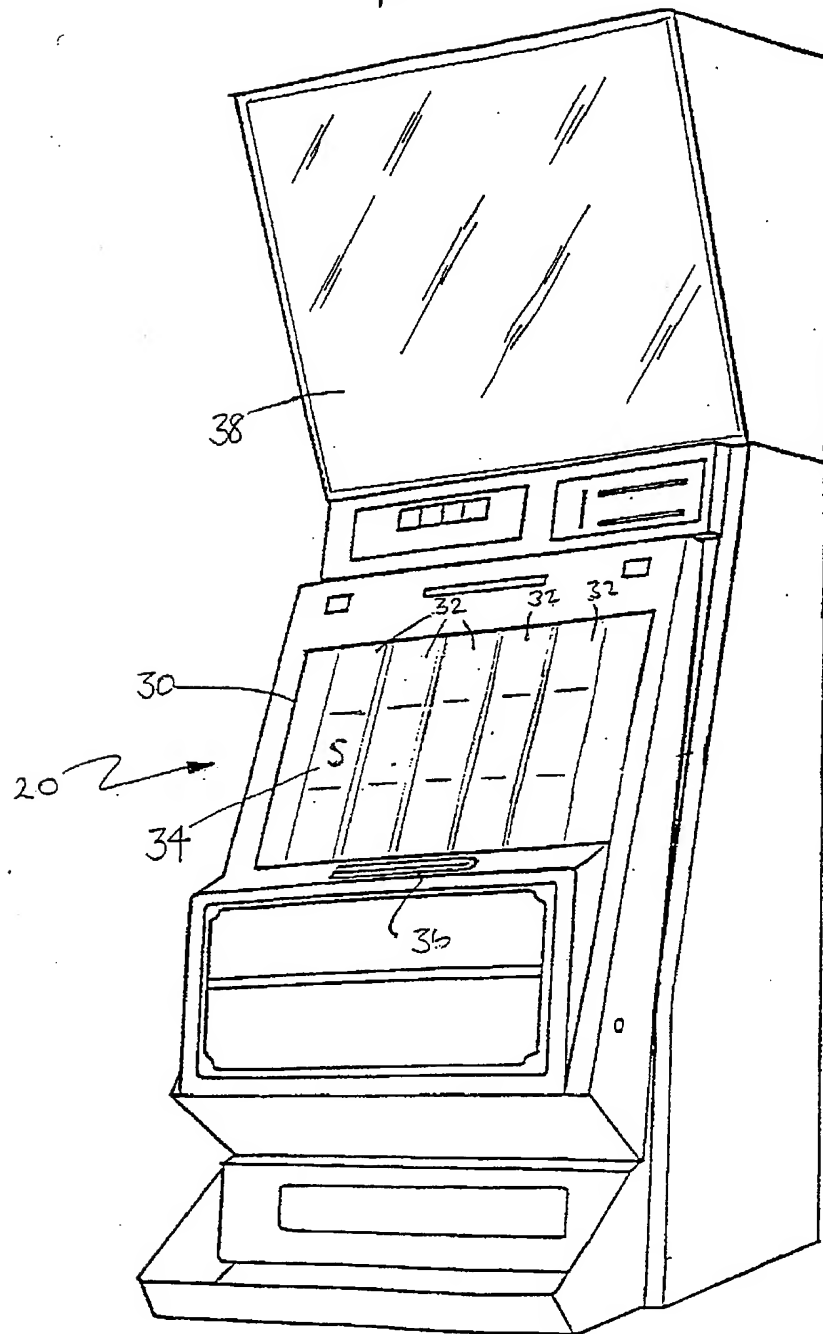
THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A gaming machine having display means, and game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to play a game wherein a plurality of indicia are randomly selected and displayed on the display means the indicia including wild card symbols which can substitute for any symbol and, if a winning combination occurs, the machine pays a prize, the game being characterised in that the wild card also substitute for linearly adjacent symbols or symbols at other predetermined locations on the display.
2. A gaming machine as claimed in claim 1 wherein the wild card substitutes for symbols which are lineally or diagonally adjacent only.
3. A gaming machine as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the display of the gaming machine includes a set of rotatable reels.
4. A gaming machine as claimed in claim 1 of claim 2, wherein the display means is a video simulation of a plurality of reels.
5. A gaming machine as claimed in claim 1 of claim 2, wherein the display means is a video simulation of a draw poker hand.
6. A gaming machine as claimed in claim 5, wherein the display means defines a multi-line display of drawpoker hands disposed one above the other.

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ARISTOCRAT LEISURE INDUSTRIES
PTY LTD
Patent Attorneys for the Applicant:

F.B. RICE & CO.



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|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|
| 3 | K | J | K | K | SVN |
| 1 | Q | Q | W | Q | Q |
| 2 | J | J | J | TEN | J |

52

56

FIG. 2

50
4
5
2
8